Kawasaki 650 Dual Sport News

... Newsletter of the Kawasaki 650 Dual Sport Owners Group

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1997

Send subscriptions, comments and articles to:
Kawasaki 650 Dual Sport News
P.O. Box 698
Sandia Park, New Mexico
87047
USA
***K650DSN*@aol.com**
(505)281-9886

Subscriptions:
In the United States
$15.00/Year
Outside the US
$20.00/Year

Back issues
$3.00 each.

Make checks payable to:
Gino Pokluda
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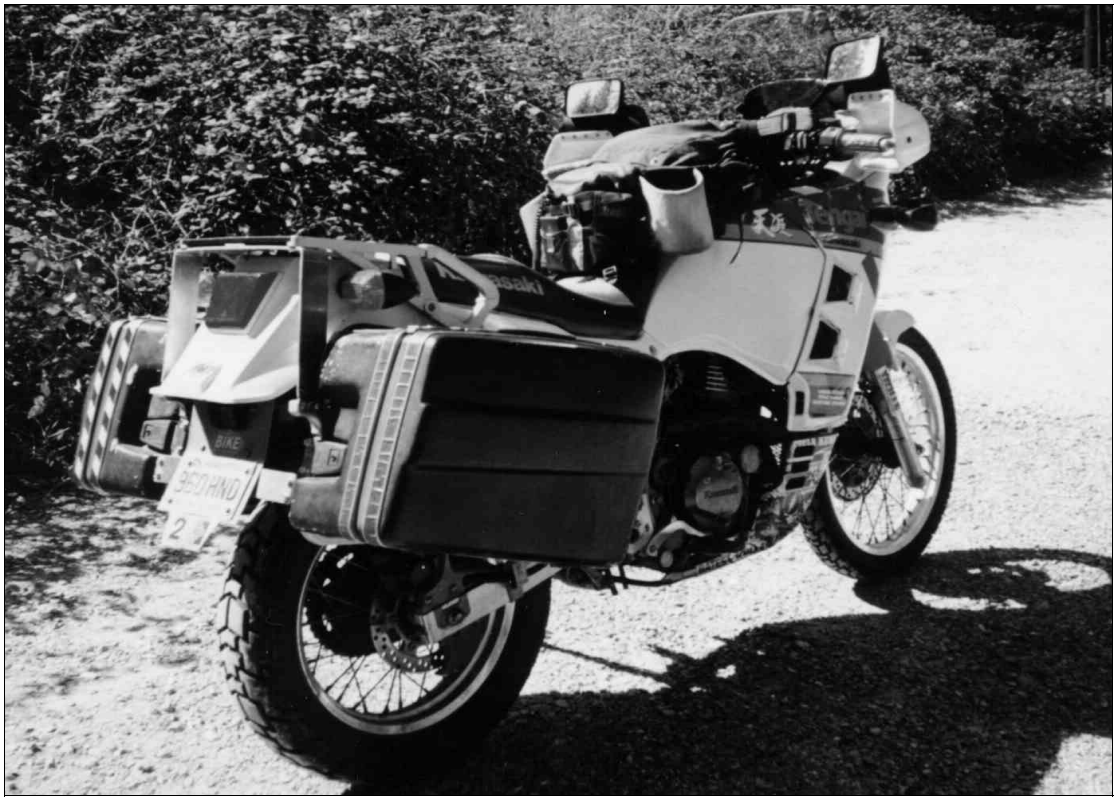
Moto Musing

Gino Pokluda



Dual Purpose or Intended Purpose?

One of the benefits of putting out a newsletter is that you get to communicate with a lot of neat people. Over the past year or so, I have had the opportunity to hear from many of our 300 subscribers about their adventures and mis-adventures, mods to their bikes, and experiences in general. What I hear the most from this audience, however, is why they purchased Kawasaki dual sports, mainly the KLR650 and Tengai models, and what they do with them. I don't know why I was surprised, but when the fact dawned on me that KL650's are used for everything from pavement only touring to all-out desert racing, I was amazed. How could one dual sport motorcycle, so ignored by the motorcycle press and basically unknown to the majority of motorcycle riders, be capable of performing some many different tasks? Well, part of the reason lies in the machine itself. Never really intended to be a contender in the Baja 500, the 650 series was given qualities that would allow it to function in a wide variety of conditions. This is called "versatility", a word long extinct from the vocabulary of motorcycle manufacturers.

A bigger part of the reason, though, lies in the people who buy and ride these bikes. To people who by a motorcycle as a tool, the Kawasaki 650 DP bikes, especially the KLR650, are unequalled. For those who strictly commute or tour on pavement, the KLR willing accepts high mileage street tires and hard luggage. Those who seek a little more adventure in life can upgrade the suspension, put on aggressive tires and let the dirt fly. The fact that a readily accessible catalogue of bolt-on goodies is all but non-existent is almost a blessing as every KLR and Tengai seems to

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...Moto Musing

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take on a life and character all its own once the owner begins to make mods to the bike. Let's not forget the KLX either. I purchased my used KLX650C for the sole purpose of back-road chicanery. Dual headlights, flat bars, heavily street biased radials, a pipe and jetting let my marauding KLX stun unwary sport bike riders. Subscriber, Steve Johnson, on the other hand, has turned his KLX into an adventurer tourer/off-road-maniac machine with a large tank, upgraded suspension and performance modifications.

In this issue you will get to read about personalized machines that some owners have created. Hopefully it will give the new comers to the Kawasaki 650 dual sport world some ideas on how to "build" a bike to suite their needs. I personally like the "anything goes" mentality when it comes to bike personalization. For example, I'm lost without a tank bag in front of me. Instead of searching for some exotic dual sport tank bag, I used what was available. I had a couple well used Tour Masters in the garage, but the mounting straps weren't compatible with the KLR650's body. No problem, a quick trip to the local outdoor supply store yielded the nylon strap, buckles and fasteners I needed to custom make a harness which secures the tank bag to the KLR and it works great. In fact I liked it so much, I used the other worn Tour Master on my KLX. Yeah, it overlaps on the seat a bit, so what?

The point of all of this is that there is no rule book when it comes to modifying a bike to meet your needs. The only thing you need to ask yourself is "Does it work for me?". If the answer to that question is "yes", then go for it.

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Tengai with a Purpose

As I mentioned in my "Moto Musing" editorial, building a bike to suite your needs is one of the most important things you can do as a motorcyclist. Michael Haber's modified Tengai is rolling proof that this is true and that modifying a bike can be done on a budget. Michael and his wife, Cathy, brought the Tengai over from Hawaii and toured the US on it. Now they break away whenever they can to tour all over the US on their venerable KL650-B1.

The most prominent feature on this Tengai are the Krauser hardbags (see photo on front page) sourced from a local junk yard. Michael customized the moutning system to fit the Tengai and presto, he had detachable hard luggage on a budget. Also note the nice job on the extended windshield which uses the existing mounting screws. All in all a very nice package. Good job, Michael.

UPDATES

Kawasaki 650 Dual Sport Owners

Those of you with a sharp eye probably noticed the change in the banner of this issue. Yes, we are now officially an owners group instead of just a newsletter, not that that means much at this time. In the near future, I will be sending out membership cards with member numbers and I hope to get some advertising cards or tri-folds out soon also. The main benefit of becoming an owners group is that it entitles me to some free advertising in some publications and will allow me a few more options in organizing the group in the future.

GIVI USA gets Five Stars connection

Paul at Givi USA has informed me that he now has good communications with the Five Stars distributor in Germany and is stocking the popular Five Stars side carriers for Givi luggage. If you are not interested in Givi luggage,

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you may still want to get some of the racks as we have learned that many of the aluminum boxes discussed in this issue are compatible with the Five Stars side carriers. We are also confident that we will be able to soon adapt Pelican bags to the racks with a quick release mechanism. Stay tuned for more.

RTTM Going to Africa?

The Ride To The Moon expedition team is healing from the loss of their fellow rider, Jay. When I last spoke with some of the team members, they were considering a trans-Africa ride, possibly on KLR650s.

Cover Photo

This issue's cover photo is of Michael Haber's wonderfully modified Tengai. Checkout "Tengai with a Purpose" in this issue. If you would like to submit a cover photo, please send one in with a brief description of the picture. If you would like it back, please include a self

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First Ride in the Andes

Mike Palmer

The Andes mountains seemed to be saying, "Come to me, come higher, come deeper into my shadows, explore and enjoy, but stay too long and I'll kill you. I could never go far enough into the mountains to find out if that was true or not on my little Honda Ascot V twin. It didn't hold enough gas and was restricted to the pavement.

I often saw dirt roads disappearing between the high peaks into the clouds, but dared not venture too far from a gas station or the pavement for fear of running out of fuel and day light. Few vehicles travel those roads and being stranded in the mountains as far south as Mendoza could be disastrous or at the least make for a very uncomfortable night.

All of Argentina and its uncivilized beauty opened up to me the day I traded the FT500V in on a new Kawasaki KL 650 Tengai. The first place I'd go would have to be the Andes and those mysterious dirt roads. The map showed I could ride international highway 7 from our home in Mendoza to Uspallata about 7000 feet up. From there turn back toward Mendoza on a dirt road, climb a little higher then descend on a winding dirt road to Las Heras which connects to the city of Mendoza.

Only 25 miles from my house and I was thumping along in the mountains on the Tengai. I had brought home a brochure of the Tengai long before I bought it and envisioned myself riding this very highway on a blue Tengai and now here I was fulfilling the dream, only on a red UK model.

Highway 7 is the principle route from Argentina to Chile. The first 50 miles or so are the best riding as it zigzags along beside the Mendoza River. There are many "pull off" areas to stop and explore the river as well as dirt roads, some dead end others hundreds of miles long, to explore.

Arriving at Uspallata with only 80 miles on my trip meter there was no need to buy fuel that would only be the halfway mark of the ride. Uspallata is one of

Argentina's military training camps. A guard wanted to know where I was going and where I was riding. Since I was not going on to Chile no paper work was necessary and I was on my way to do some serious exploring in the Andes. The map showed to take the first dirt to the right just outside of Uspallata. There it was and what a nice road it was, just right for the heavy beast I was riding. Not graveled, but natural gravel of the mountains, well packed and just wide enough for a jeep. It winded through canons, under cliffs, through small streams and past abandoned gold mines. Up, down and around.

I'd been climbing gradually for about 40 miles and had seen no vehicles, no humans and no trees. Then I saw three lamas looking down upon me from a high ridge. I left the motor

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... Ride in the Andes

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running hoping not to frighten them away until I could get a picture, but they nervously disappeared over the hill. Then I saw just in front of my front tire why they were so anxious to get out of sight, four llamas' feet. Hunting them is prohibited, but enforcement is rare.

It was about then that I realized I was having so much fun I hadn't noticed the road had shrunken to a single lane trail. Having had ridden enduros for years I was feeling right at home, but this was not the road I was supposed to be on. Not wanting to turn back I continued on, only to find myself in a dry rocky river bed following a narrow trail weaving though the helmet size rocks and boulders. This was not where I wanted to be on the Tengai. However I could see dirt bike tracks and figured this trail would come out on a road before long.

The dirt bike tracks disappeared and I was now following a trail made by horses. I had about two hours of day light left, not enough time to return the way I came. I was riding east though and knew sooner or later I would top a hill and see the Mendoza valley below. Or come upon the end of the trail at a sheer cliff. It happened, the trail ended, but not like anything I had expected. I came upon a huge rock formation where people were living in a large cave. They had enclosed the front of the cave with rocks leaving a hole for smoke to escape at the top; a couple of shutters for windows and a door made of sticks. The front yard was fenced in, to keep their goats and horses, with rocks and thorn bushes. There was a small stream running right in front of their cave. What a place to live.

My Spanish wasn't the greatest at the time, but I managed to ask one of the kids that came out of the cave, (cave rats?) to see this strange lost traveler on his iron horse, how could I find my way to a road that would take me to Mendoza. "No hay problema" one said. "All you have to do is follow the river bed (read that, lots of rocks) back a couple of kilometers and then when you come to the Y in the river go to the right and you'll come to some roads. Take one of those. I wondered what he meant by "some roads", but if I didn't find my way out of these mountains soon I was going to have spend the night with the cave people and my wife would kill me if I ever did make it home again. I was definitely out of the Tengai's preferred environment but when I went to the right at the "Y" I picked up the dirt bike tracks again. With the skid plate grinding against the rocks and the engine rattling along as it does I finally came to a place where there were "some roads". One road went to the west and turned to the north; another went east and couple more I could see went off to the west disappearing into the valleys. I was on top of this mountain; I could see blue sky all around me. All the roads went down from there; I only had to pick the right one. I took the road going east. The soil was black and the rolling hills were covered with green grass. I was at about 9,000 feet altitude, the bike seemed to run smoother up there than it does in the hot

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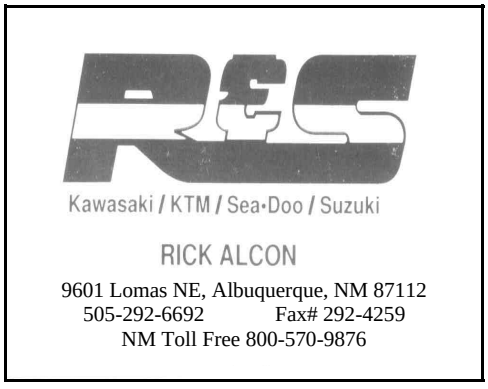

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addressed and stamped envelop with it.

Directory

I have received many calls from folks asking why they are not in the directory. I will only include your name in the directory if you tell me to by phone, e-mail or snail-mail. If you would like to be included in the next K650DSN directory, please send your name, address, phone and e-mail address. The next directory will be in the January/ February issue.

Ride West BMW

K650DSN would like to welcome **Ride West BMW** to the ranks of dual sport supporters. Ride West has just become the US dealer for **Touratech** adventure touring products. While most of the Touratech product line is aimed at the BMW market, there are several items that they can procure that are in demand at this time. First on the list are the Five Stars center stands for the

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KLR650 and Tengai. Another demand item are the Five Stars engine guards for the KLR650. Quality Touratech aluminum bags an quick release mechanisms (see aluminum pannier feature) are also available from Ride West BMW as are many GPS and LCD trip computers. For more information, please contact **Howard** at **Ride West BMW, 206-527-5511**.

Kawasaki KLR650 Soft Luggage

Has Kawasaki USA finally come to their senses about the abilities of the KLR650? I think so. I'm currently testing soft luggage made specifically for the KLR650 and so far so good. Kawasaki has designed a tank bag, soft saddle bags and a really sweet tail trunk for the KLR, all of which are available through your local dealer. A full report on these products will be in the next issue of K650DSN.

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... Ride in the Andes

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valley below. The black roads were moist and perfect for the big thumper. I could have stayed all day but my day was about spent and I was still basically lost. I turned off the road and climbed a steep hill to scope things out and see where the road I was on was taking me. It was getting cold, I had to know how far I was from civilization.

The mighty thumper climbed the slick black hill as well as any over loaded pack mule could. There it was, what I was looking for, the plains of Mendoza far below. I could see the road on which I was traveling twisting its way down the mountain to Las Hares.

The Tengai had taken me to another Tengai (the Japanese word for a far away land over a distant horizon). I had gone high into the Andes, I had entered her shadows, I explored and I enjoyed. And I came out alive. Thanks Tengai.

Mike Palmer
Casilla de Correo 88
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Is it possible to get some of the neat motorcycle accessories they have in Europe here in the States? Well, if you ask Rich Meadors, the answer is an emphatic "YES!" Rich, an avid adventure tourer and dual sporter, is applying to become the distributor of some of the more better known adventure tour suppliers in Europe, such as Darr, Five Stars and others.

Rich also supplies parts to dealerships much like Parts Unlimited. Welcome to the wild and wacky world of Kawasaki 650 dual sport owners, Rich.

TECH TIPS

Safety Switch By-Pass

WARNING *- The following modifications will disable the safety mechanisms in your KLR650. These modifications should only be performed by riders who have the requirement of being able to start their bikes in gear. General purpose riders should not perform these safety switch disconnects. If you choose to perform the following modifications, it is your responsibility to notify any mechanic working on your bike of the changes and to reconnect the switches should you sell your motorcycle. - Ed.*

Special Thanks *go to Bill Haycock for originally exploring this tech tip for me. Thanks Bill!*

Most motorcycles have two safety switches wired into the circuitry of the electrical system; the side stand safety switch and the neutral safety switch. The side stand safety switch will not allow the motorcycle to be shifted into gear with the side stand down for obvious reasons. The neutral safety switch will not allow the motorcycle to be started in gear, again for obvious reasons. Believe or not, however, there are situations when you would want to have your machine in gear with the side stand down or the ability to start the bike in gear with the clutch out.

Case1 - Some riders do not want to add the weight of a center stand to their bike and prefer to use what's called a "Cheater Stand", a steel rod that when used on the right side of the swing arm in conjunction with the side stand , allows the rear wheel to be levered off of the ground. With the engine running, the bike in gear and a deft hand feathering the clutch, the chain can be lubed in seconds. The side stand safety switch does not allow that to happen.

Case 2 - On a rocky section of trail, your bike stalls, you fall over and break the clutch lever down to the mount, with no amount of lever available to work the clutch. Not to worry, you simply rock the bike until you can shift it down to first gear. Then you start the bike. The bike will move forward immediately when you hit the starter, but will start and you can shift without the clutch by getting the bike to the appropriate RPM and shifting up or down. The neutral safety switch would not allow you to do this.

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.... Tech Tips: Safety Switch By-Pass

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The following procedures will allow you to by-pass the two safety switches in a way that will allow you to reconnect them easily should you decide to sell your bike. I have made this modifications only to my KLR650, which sees all of my off-road mileage. My Tengai and KLX remain stock. I also purchased a Day-Glo orange 3X5 index card and wrote the following message on it: *WARNING: All safety switches on this KLR650 have been by-passed. This motorcycle will start in gear with the clutch out and side stand down!* I had the card laminated and attached to my spare key. Should I ever have to take the bike to a dealer for service, that card would warn the service mechanic about the modifications.

Neutral Safety Switch

First remove the fairing from the bike and then remove the small plastic shroud that protects the wiring connections just underneath the front of the instrument cluster. The three wires that run from the clutch lever switch are covered in black loom, follow that to where it connects with the main wiring harness at the connector plate (area covered by the small plastic shroud). Disconnect the connectors for that set of wires and zip-tie the wires from the clutch switch to the connector plate. There will be two stripped wires and one solid color wire going to the main harness connector. The two stripped wires have to be jumpered together to complete the circuit. I made a small wire jumper and jumped to two wires where they enter the connector. Your switch is now by-passed. You should check that your neutral light still works and that the bike will start with the clutch lever out in neutral. Replace the connector shroud and fairing and your done!

Side Stand Safety Switch

The side stand safety switch resides behind the small plastic cover on the left side of the bike mounted to the frame (follow the wire cable from the side stand up). Remove the plastic cover and follow the wire to where it connects via a connector to the main harness. Disconnect the connector and zip-tie the wire running from the side stand to a nearby location. The two wires at the main harness connector have to be jumpered to complete the circuit. I used a spade connector and slid it inside the connector making the connection between the spades in the connector. I verified the circuit by starting the bike in neutral with the side stand down. Then, which the clutch lever in and front brake applied, I shifted the bike into gear and began to release the clutch. If the motor lugs, then the switch is bypassed. If the motor dies, then the by-pass connection is bad and you need to re-apply your jumper. Replace the plastic cover, make your warning card and you are done!

WORD FROM KAWASAKI

K650DSN now has two contacts at Kawasaki USA to keep you up to date on the latest in motorcycling; John Hoover, Director of Marketing and Sales and Karl Edmonds in the ever expanding Kawasaki USA accessories division. John did not have any breaking news for the dual sport market except that it is was showing signs of a mild increase in sales but then went flat again. Kawasaki was ready, and still is for that matter, to bring the KLX650 back into the US if there is any sign of a increase in sales in the 650 and up category.

The KLR650 is a safe bet for the coming years. In John's words, "If there is anyone out there who wants to build custom items for the KLR650 but is waiting to see if the KLR650 will be around for awhile, all I have to tell them is tool up!" John acknowledged that last years allotment of KLR650s sold out the earliest ever in the history of the bike. There are no plans to build more units, however as Kawasaki is happy with the current number sold and would rather focus on the 6 new models that will grace floors of Kawasaki dealerships.

If you have been thinking about getting a 1998 model KLR650, I wouldn't wait too long as Kawasaki fully expects the KLR650 to sell out earlier than last year. Not to worry if you miss out, however. "The KLR is such an easy bike to build," John told me. "It is built entirely on the Just-In-Time (JIT) principal of manufacturing, which means no parts inventory is required to build it. Adding to this is the fact that the KLR is very easy to put together which means it can be built on any assembly line. John told me that when he visited the factory, he would see KLR650s mixed in with ZX11s. All of this

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Subscription Renewals

If your mailing label has **RENEW** in the upper right corner, you'd better pay your subscription dues if you don't want to miss out on the next issue!

Drive Line Service Side Racks for KLR650

Tim Bernard wanted me to pass along that he is still making his famous side protector racks for the KLR650. Tim says business is brisk but hopes to keep up with demand. Tim also makes heavy duty shifter levers and highway pegs for the KLR650. As strange as the highway pegs may sound, don't laugh. I sent a set to Jake Jakeman to evaluate and he refuses to send them back! Look for a full review in the next issue. When you call, wish Tim well. He injured his knee in May and may be able to get back on a bike in the late Fall. Good luck to you, Tim! You can reach Tim at **Drive Line Service**

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in Boise, Idaho, **800-444-8770**

Capital Cycle Rises From the Ashes?

Just when I thought I had heard the last from Capital Cycle, I got a call from the new owner telling me that Capital Cycle is now under new management, has been restructured, and is ready willing and able to restore consumer confidence in the company. In a lengthy conversation with Batt, the new sole owner of the company, I learned that the company had major legal troubles within its partners and customers. "All of that is behind the company, now", assures Batt. He has restructured the way Capital Cycle does business, by putting all of his energies into the public consumer. "We do not have a dealer program anymore", Batt told me. "All of our efforts will be driven by the individual and not the dealerships". Time will tell if Capital Cycle

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...Kawasaki

(Continued from page 6)

means that the next run of KLR650's could be stepped up if needed.

In the world of other manufacturers, the BMW F650 will be BMW's best selling bike in the US. "Current sales figures are very good for that bike", John said. Honda continues to see a drop in overall bike sales including dual sports. The Suzuki DR650 continues to be the best selling dual sport in the class and there are no indications that the Freewind will be making it to the US anytime soon. Yamaha, however, is showing signs that it may be bringing in the XTZ660 Tenere.

All in all, it looks like status-quo for the dual sport market as we, as a class of riders, compete for the same pool of the recreational-spending-dollars as cruisers and the new round of sporting twins. It is good to hear, though, that the big four are ready to jump in with new or re-introduced DP models should the market show any signs of revival. We can always hope.

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Aluminum Panniers

I remember the first time I saw aluminum side boxes on a motorcycle. It was a picture of a BMW R100GSPD with wide, chunky looking boxes, piled high with gear and spare tires. I remember asking my self, "Who would ever want those things on their bike?" Now, older and wiser, I have learned that aluminum panniers have a definite place in the world of motorcycle touring and offer some significant benefits over their plastic brethren. With aluminum's inherent property of being light and strong, boxes made of the material can be made with a relatively thin wall thickness and lack of ribs and supporting contours as found in plastic cases. Aluminum also allows items to be mounted to the metal much easier than plastic. Most of all, however, aluminum is extremely durable and will withstand impacts that would shatter plastic cases into pieces. For the hard core expedition rider and adventure tourer, there is no substitute. Up until just recently, only a hand full of

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Left: Hepco & Becker side case with cork liner.

Right: Aluminum top case available from Hepco & Becker

... Aluminum Panniers

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companies have made aluminum panniers, mainly Hepco-Becker and Darr. With the increased interest in adventure touring, however, several other companies have joined the ranks and now provide the average dual sport rider more options in this area.

Hepco and Becker is the only company I know of that offers complete racks and aluminum panniers (as well as plastic luggage) for all three Kawasaki 650 dual sports; KLR650, Tengai and KLX650. H-B offers two sizes of aluminum side boxes, 30 and 40 liter, and two sizes of aluminum top cases 30 and 45 liter. The H-B systems feature very stout tube frames that can also incoporate a tubular top rack. They are available from **M&P** in the UK **011-44-990-703030** and **Ride West BMW 888-527-7433**

Darr boxes are considered the most widely used bags in the industry. They seem to have been around forever and were the first aluminum bags I ever saw on a bike. Darr offers three sizes of side case and one size for a top box. The "Bike Box" is the smallest at 32 liters, followed by the "Big Box" at 36 liters while the "Jumbo Box" comes in at 40 liters. The "Top Box" is 24 liters and can only be used for top box application by its design. Darr boxes are of the "one-model-fits-all" class with no mounts furnished. When you get the boxes, it is pretty much up to you to figure out how to mount them. This is not as difficult as it sounds though, as Five Stars or Hepco-Becker side racks could be used for a Darr application. At this time, there is no supplier in the US for Darr boxes. **Richard**

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Richard Meadors' Darr Box equipped KLR650

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can pull this one off. Good luck to them.

Capital Cycle 800-642-5100

Mike Conners Crashes in South America

K650DSN subscriber, Mike Conners crashed his BMW R1100GS in South America and is in good shape here in the States. His BMW, however is still in a box some where down south. Hope you and the GS both have a speedy recovery, Mike

Mechanical Failure Stops Jim Barthell in the Iron Butt

A mechanical failure on Jim Barthell's KLR650 knocked him out of contention early on into the Iron Butt Rally. At this time I do not know the exact cause of the problem, but I will keep you posted.

Dual Star

Mike Walburn has returned from his from his tour of Europe and reports some progress in possibly getting some of the more unique European products here Stateside. Mike

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...Aluminum Panniers

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Meadors of **American Cycle Supply** is in the processes of trying to become a Darr distributor. If you have any questions he can be reached at **800-695-5813**.

I have been working with Dan Doerr of **Frank Doerr Equipment** for almost a year now in the area of aluminum panniers. Dan is a motorcycle enthusiast and has been making aluminum boxes for BMW bikes for several years now. When I approached him about the possibility of making boxes for a KLR650, he was very enthusiastic and a few months later I had a prototype set on my KLR650. The prototype set uses a new rear luggage plate to function as part of the mounting system. Front and rear struts provide rigidity for the 30 liter top-loading boxes. The prototype set required the relocation of the turn signals and somewhat hid the tail light. So for safety safe, the rear plate will be redesigned to provide a better view of the tail light and minimal and more conventional relocation of the turn signals. The quality of the boxes is superb with two locks per box and all four locks keyed the same. Dan and I are also investigating the possibility of using already existing side frames like Five-Stars and Hepco-Becker instead of the new top plate. Dan makes all of his boxes custom to your specifications and can have them coated clear or black, so for more information call **Dan Doerr** at **412-488-8640**

I hinted in the July/August issue that Al Jesse may be entering the Brand-X dual sport market with his unique **Jesse aluminum panniers** and now it's official. When I talked with Al in mid-August he was getting ready to begin designing his mounting system and was looking for a KLR650 for measurements. What makes the Jesse panniers unique is that they successfully utilize wasted space near the bike. While most other luggage systems basically hang a box out far away from the chassis, Jesse boxes are made specific to the bike and tuck into the bike itself. This allows maximum capacity with minimum overall width. It also keeps the load close to the center of gravity and does not adversely affect the bikes handling. All of this does not come without cost however and Jesse luggage for BMW's is on the pricey side. I was concerned about this when I talked with Al, because frankly, most of us KLR riders are cheapskates. Al, of course, knew this and said that his KLR system will be competitively priced. He also told me that he would like to hear from potential buyers for ideas and interest. You can call **Al Jesse Luggage Systems** at **712-732-2234**.

Touratech is the latest to enter the US adventure touring fray with a distributorship through **Ride West BMW** in Seattle, Washington. While geared mainly for the BMW market, Ride West stocks the very nice Touratech aluminum boxes in 35 and 41 liter sizes. The boxes have water tight lids and

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Prototype Doerr Boxes on the editor's KLR650

.....Aluminum Panniers

Al Jesse's unique aluminum panniers (shown on a BMW F650) cut a slim profile while offering good capacity.

heavy duty latches and each lid has several tie down bars already attached. In addition to the aluminum boxes, Touratech also has mounting hardware that will attach the boxes to Five-Stars and Hepco and Becker side frames, both of which are also available from Ride West BMW. Touratec also offer an excellent selection of GPS equipment. For more information about Touratech products call **Ride West BMW** and ask for **Howard** at **888-527-7433.**

If none of the above options suites your fancy, consider making your own panniers like Jim Fourtney. Jim located a set of used aluminum equipment boxes and fabricated his own mounts using some salvaged BMW mounts as a starting point. With some planning, machining and grinding, Jim fabricated a very nice setup that was detachable from the bike and looked factory. If you decide to get ambitious and design your own aluminum setup, keep a few things in mind. Remember not to cover your taillight or turn signals, they both should be visible from rearward side angle. Try to keep your boxes low so as not to carry weight too high on your bike. Finally make sure you can remove your side panels without having to remove the boxes.

Touratech aluminum panniers on a KTM

... Aluminum Panniers

TOP: *Jim Fourtney used surplus aluminum equipment bags and old BMW side case carriers for the basis of his project.*

BOTTOM: *Note slick top opening bags with handles and new high visibility turn signals. Jim took this bike to Alaska this year.*

Sprocket Help

In addition to his help on aluminum panniers, Jim Fourtney was also able to get me some info on a company that produces different sized counter shaft sprockets for the KLR650. **Cycle Concepts Inc. , 26841 Ruether Ave. Ste A, Santa Clarita, CA 91351, (805)252-7819, FAX (805)252-6319** will custom make any sprocket you request. In Jim's case, he had them make a 16 tooth counter shaft sprocket. Give them a call for your sprocket needs.

(Continued from page 8)

is also painfully aware of the discontent some customers have at this point in trying to purchase products from Dual Star. Mike wants to assure everyone that Dual Star is alive and well, but trying to get quality products produced at the best possible price in a timely fashion is very difficult to do. As most of you know, the center stands for the KLR have been delayed by the inability to get the right parts and materials in to complete production. All I can say is that after talking at length with Mike, I feel he is sincere in his wanting to provide quality products for the dual sport enthusiast, however execution of the plan is sometimes difficult. Mike also wanted me to let everyone know that he hopes to have steel foot pegs with rubber inserts available for the KLR650 soon. **Dual Star 206-776-7433**

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Reader Feedback

Dear Gino, I must say this is the best newsletter I've seen to date. Most clubs just fill the space with readers collections/address or LARGE PRINT.

I was slightly involved with one now demised two-stroke club and another had the problems listed above. I like to know the weakness of the bikes (all of my bikes seem to get 50-60K).

My KLR was bought out of necessity. My RZ was down again and my friend had the KLR or an old GS Suzuki. I wondered what I was missing by not having a single. My first test ride revealed the greatest weakness; BRAKES! Being a front-brake-only person, coming upon a fender bender I had to almost split lanes through the accident. The bike now has Braking oversized disk and steel line (fair but not great), WP rear shock (good), foam grips, bar snake, cruise control, modified Corbin (too high for most, but fairly comfy). Tried your Progressive front (springs); not too thrilled, stiffer than I like and get a clunking now and then (spacer cut like said).

Was hoping to take the KLR to Colorado, but due to high oil consumption on a rebuilt motor, I took the VFR. My friend, Britt Childress has showed me a lot about how to ride the pavement twisties very fast, occasionally scraping the left footpeg.

Please disclose modifications that are good for the road. Please stress to others to keep that counter balancer adjuster adjusted. Thanks. Also want info on center stand.

Glenn Coodington, Oakland, CA.

Glenn, Thanks for the positive feedback. The clunking in you fork has me baffled. I checked and rechecked my specs on the Progressive fork spring modification and they are correct. I would check fork oil level, steering head bearing adjustment next. As for main weaknesses on the KLR650, I would have to say the whole font end of the bike needs help as you have found out. The counter shaft sprocket retainer as found on pre 1996 models is another weak spot. For those carrying heavy loads, the rear sub-frame might be a tad weak also. Center stands can be ordered from Dual Star and Ride West BMW, check this issue for phone numbers for both places. As for making the KLR a better road bike. You have learned one of the great secrets we dual sporters have known for years. Well ridden dual sports can startle most sport bikes in the twisties. I would consider a lowering kit and premium road biased dual purpose tires like the Michelin Sirac or TX66 radial. Good luck and keep in touch - Ed.

ARROWHEAD MOTORSPORTS
Motorcycle Service, Parts, Accessories

Fred Hink
801-259-7356

2970 Desert Rd.
Moab, Utah 84532

.....Updates

(Continued from page 11)

HELP!

The growth an popularity of this newsletter has pretty much taken me by surprise, so I'm calling for help in certain areas. Right now, I need someone to take over the K650DSO homepage. Time and resources will have to be 100% donated at this time as my tight budget barely covers the cost of getting this Newsletter to you. If you are interested, please feel free to call me and we'll talk about it. Thanks. - Ed.

Quality Engine R&D

Steve Kesselring has completed his move to Alabama and is in the process of setting up shop. He is taking orders for the next run of the ever popular KLR650 Lowering links. If you are interested in a set, give Steve a call at **334-677-1708.**

******

Dear Gino: I purchased my 1990 Tengai (used) in 1994. I enjoy the bike and enjoy its on/off road capabilities My fiancée (Shari) and I use the bike to explore the backroads of Utah and Arizona.

One current concern of mine is the availability of some of the fragile plastic pieces on the bike. I have purchased some plastic from Kawasaki, which seemed a little on the pricey side. I have set the bike over a couple of times while attempting large rocks and deep sand. Thus, resulting in some small damage.

Do you know if the clutch lever is common to other brands and makes so I can purchase from an aftermarket source? If so, what specifications?

Shari and I toured Northwest New Mexico in September '96. We stayed in Aztec one night and had breakfast and dinner at a coffee house called The Wandering Traveler. The proprietor (I believe his name was Hal) made us welcome to the state and provided great service and food. Highway 64, Chama, Taos and

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Dual Sport Alliance

KTM Adventure Bike

I don't know how many of you are Star Trek fans, but there was a time when I wouldn't miss an episode. One of my favorites was when Captain Kirk was separated into two different individuals in a transporter accident. One Captain Kirk was mean, aggressive, and physical. The other was gentle, kind, considerate and indecisive. When I look at the KTM Adventure bike and compare it to the last bike I reviewed, the BMW F650, I can't help but think that a similar transporter accident happened when scientists were trying to transport a KLR650 someplace. In keeping with the story line, two bikes would have been generated; the kinder, gentler BMW F650 and the meaner, more aggressive KTM Adventure bike.

I've been know to like my bikes a little "rough around the edges" as my motorcycle buddies tell me. Refined motorcycles don't last long in my garage, but bikes that exhibit some character are welcomed with open arms. The KTM would be right at home. When I first saw the bike at R&S Kawasaki and KTM, I studied it and poured over all of the nice details KTM incorporated into it. For starters, the premium suspension components; White Power "Extreme" conventional fork up front and a White Power Multi Adjuster out back with a piggy-back reservoir. The gorgeous polished stainless steel 2-into-1-into-2 low mount exhaust system. Yes, that's right, this is a thumper, the two exhaust valves each have their own header pipe. The polished swing arm and stout bash plate. Twin headlamps peer from underneath a small integrated fairing topped with one of the strangest windscreens I've ever seen on a bike. Instruments are completely high tech. A digital display shows speed in either mph or kph and route info. The only analog instrument is the tachometer which is nice and large. Handlebar switches are standard fair and well placed. The only exception being the oddly shaped and placed starter button. Do not worry if you can't find it, KTM isn't scared by lawyers and the Adventure bike has a kick starter located on the left side. Then there is that monster of a fuel tank. 7.9 gallons of your favorite fuel, as long as it is gasoline, can be stored in a fuel cell that looks like Carlsbad Caverns when you peer into the filler opening. Twin petcocks and an electric fuel pump make sure that every drop of the precious fluid will make it to the single 40mm Dell Otro carburetor. A long, semi-wide seat is nicely covered with a tacky, rubbery material, and very, very dense foam. A small but nice luggage rack cleans up the rear with tucked in turn signals. KTM's definition of a dual sport is a dirt bike with lights and the Adventure bike did not venture far from that definition. Steel footpegs with rubber inserts and 18" rear wheel and almost 14 inches of ground clearance prove it. Unfortunately, the side panniers had not arrived yet, so I cannot comment on them. I could see where the mounts would attach to the bike, however, and it looks like they will be as stout as the Chrom-moly "Rallye Frame" of the KTM. The whole package is finished off nicely with choice Metzeler Enduro Sahara 3 tube type tires.

Okay, it looks good in the showroom, how does it ride? With no hesitation, Rick Alcon handed me the keys and let me take her out for a spin. Knowing that this was one of the few Adventure Bikes to make it stateside, I decided that and short, easy test ride would have to suffice. Opening

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... Adventure Bike

Large tachometer and the really nice Tourmaster computer dominate the simple cockpit layout. Openly vented fuel tank keeps this bike out of California.

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the filler cap to check the fuel level was futile. Although I could not see any fuel in the abyss, I was assured that there was two or three gallons in there somewhere. With a little choke and a stab of the starter, the 609cc thumper came alive. Despite the dual exhaust, it still had the characteristic "chuffa, chuffa" that all single cylinder dual sports have. Throwing a leg over this bike should be an Olympic event right up there with the parallel bars. The first thing I looked for, once in the saddle, was an oxygen mask. This is a very tall bike with a 37 inch seat height and at 5'10", I was at the limit of being able to reasonably sit on the bike. Only the toes on one foot managed to make it to the ground. Once situated, I started for the street.

A rare opening in traffic gave the opportunity to test the low-end grunt of the KTM and it has plenty, due in part to it lower gearing. Riding on city streets is a hoot on this bike. Unless your behind a semi-truck, you can see over the roofs of most cars. I made my way down to some open land where there were dirt construction roads and such. The KTM 609cc engine vibrated more than I thought it would, which was a surprise. For those who think a KLR650 vibrates a lot, a ride on one of these would tell them otherwise. Another thing I noticed was how hard the seat was. It's curved shape, which is common on dirt bikes to allow the rider to shift from side to side easily, only made it more uncomfortable. By the time I got to my destination, I had to stop to see if there was indeed a seat on the bike.

Up until now the suspension, seemed on the stiff side. Even when I got into some rutted dirt roads, the White Power suspension seemed on the firm side. When you look at the intended purpose of the machine, however, you realize that KTM had done the right thing by putting a stiff suspension on the bike. The KTM was designed to be loaded down with gear and fuel. Add 300 pounds of rider, fuel and gear and eleven inches of firm suspension will be quickly tamed. Likewise with the brakes. The Adventure has a twin pot Brembo up front with a 10" rotor and a single piston Brembo on the rear. Brakes were excellent if not a touch grabby. With a load, however, they would be just right. The KTM can be ridden briskly on irregular surfaces with no worries thanks in part to the Metzelers with their superb traction and predictability. After I played in the dirt it was time head to the freeway. I hopped a couple of curbs and made my way to the interstate. This was the first time I was able to get the KTM over 40 mph and things began to happen. First, the vibration increased as did the unwelcome wind turbulence created by the windscreen . Second, the bike felt like it was about to run out of gas. I switched the lower petcock to reserve but to no avail, so I attributed that behavior to a very lean carb setup. From stop light to stop light, the low gearing moves the KTM with authority, but on a 75 mph interstate, the low gearing has the

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Easily the strangest windshield in the industry, The "A" bikes screen creates gobs of turbulence. You could make toast with the twin projector headlamps. All bikes should have lights this good.

The KTM is pure "eye-candy". Note two header pipes for the single cylinder and beautifully finished exhaust system and swing arm. Also worthy of note is the very large spring for the rear shock, almost twice as large as the coil spring on a stock KLR650.

... Adventure Bike

(Continued from page 14)

KTM wound up like a buzz saw. At 55 mph the Adventure is wailing away 4700 rpm. At 60 mph, the odd windscreen has your head buffeting about like glancing blows from Mike Tyson (watch your ears!), the engine is sending a lot of vibration throughout the bike, the lean carbueration makes you think your going to be pushing the bike home soon and you feel like the seat is going to cut a path all the way up to your throat.

While all of this may sound bad, you must again consider the intended purpose of the KTM. You don't find adventure on the freeway, so this bike was designed to be loaded down and ridden on two laners and dirt roads. The bike has just enough high speed super-slab manners for when you need it, but it is in its element on the back-roads. Besides that, most of the annoyances can be easily corrected. A saw will cut the windscreen down. Taller gearing, which I would not recommend, can be achieved through different sprockets thus reducing vibration. Both Mike Corbin and Travelcade sell an after market seat for the KTM Duke, which will fit the Adventure perfectly and modified jetting will take care of the lean carburetor.

When I returned the bike back to the dealer, I was asked what I thought. "It's a lot of motorcycle," I told them. You simply get much more for your money in this case, than you would with the BMW F650. Interestingly, when I was told that the bike, rolled out the door, would be close to $9,000.00, I didn't flinch...too much. I could see myself paying that much for this bike.

I like the way it's put together and how it has a personality all its own. I love the orange paint and shimmering polished steel and aluminum. I would love to walk into my garage every morning and see it there waiting for me to take it to work or, let's say, Alaska. But then, I ask myself, "Is the 1998 KTM Adventure really worth $4000.00 more than a 1998 KLR650?" Believe it or not, I think it is a draw.

Yes, I know that a KLR650 can be purchased for almost half the cost of the KTM. I know that $4,000 dollars applied to the KLR650 could make it a very worthy adventure touring bike. But the KTM simply adds too much to the bang-for-buck equation to be discounted as an overpriced dual purpose machine. When you pop the cash for one of these, you at least know that it will step up to the plate and perform. No, I think only the buyer can decide if the Adventure fits their needs. In my opinion, you can't go wrong with it.

.... Reader Feedback

(Continued from page 12)

Santa Fe made our trip! Looking forward to hearing from you.

Vince Smith

Vince,

One of the big problems with the Tengai is its fragile plastic. When I bought my Tengai, I priced replacement body work and found that one side of the fairing costs about $350.00. While that may seem quite high, it should be noted that the all plastic pieces for the Tengai come painted and marked with the OEM decals. That considered, they are quite the bargain. Since I am planning on keeping my Tengai for awhile, I will probably buy replacement plastic and keep it stored until needed. I have not been able to find another bike that shares the same levers as the KLR650 or Tengai. - Ed.

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Dear Gino,

I sure enjoy reading your newsletter. I've had my '95 KLR650 since April and put around 280-300 miles per week on it commuting to work. A couple of comments:

1. The KLR is buzzier than my DR650S
2. I highly recommend the Avon Gripster for wet/dry riding.
3. The Corbin seat is not very comfortable but good for shorter riders.
4. I put the Rifle taller windscreen on and at 6' tall, I still get quite a bit of turbulence behind it.

Overall, it's an excellent commuter bike for my needs (but the valve adjustment sucks - shims are $9.00 each here in Louisville, KY area). Another comment, Gino, your previous issue mentioned skid plates from DG and Moose, but no phone numbers or addresses were listed. I suppose the local bike shop can access these number, right? I've enclosed some literature from Travelcade you might be interested in passing along to readers. Keep up the good work and ride safe.

Mark Hatfield

Mark,

Your observations are correct. The KL650 powerplant does tend to vibrate more than some of the others, just the nature of the beast. As for the Avon Gripster, it is the runaway favorite of the KLR crowd for all-around use. You are not alone in you assessment of the Rifle wind screen, I do not suggest that you go with a taller one though, as they tend to break in windy conditions. While valves on the KLR are a pain, here are some comforting thoughts though. One is that I have yet to hear of a KLR that has needed a valve adjustment before 10K miles in normal use. When mine needed adjustment at 12K miles, only the exhaust valves needed it. My dealer cuts a significant amount off the labor cost if you bring you KLR in with all of the body work and fuel tank off. You may want to ask your dealer if they would do the same. With regards to seats, the Corbin has not faired well with the readership of the Newsletter. Some folks have had to send their Corbins back two and three times to get it right. My Corbin is okay, but not terrific. As you read this, I will be testing the Travelcade Dual Sport seats for the KLR650/Tengai and KLX650C and hope to have a full report in the November/December issue. The Moose and DG skid plates are available through your dealer or Dennis Kirk 800-328-9280 - Ed.

******

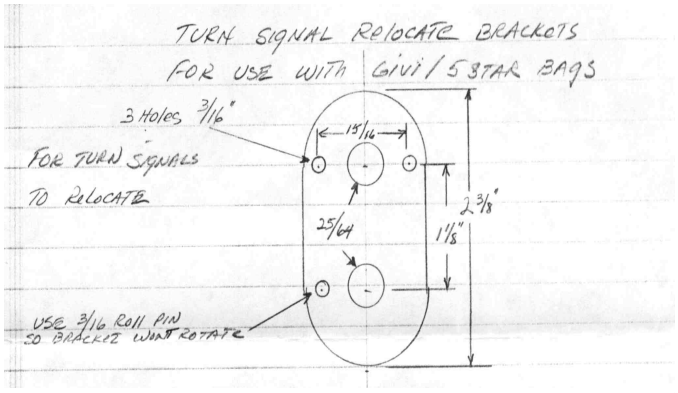
Gino,

Hope this will help others with this (Five Stars side carrier) bag setup. As you reported in the newsletter, the carriers need more thread than the turn signals can provide.

Some construction notes:

1. Made from 1/8" aluminum flatstock cut on a scroll saw.
2. Purchase 2 10mm X 40 bolt with nylocs (nylon locknuts)
3. 2 3/16 roll pins
4. 2 spacers for turn signal shank
5. Stock wiring does not have to be lengthened.

Bob



Bob,

This setback looks like it will do the trick. Five Stars side carriers were designed to use the rear turn signal bolt as part of the mounting system. The bolts do not have a long enough thread to provide adequate integrity. This alleviates that problem. Good work, Bob! - Ed.

SAGEBRUSH MACHINE SHOP
49 S. 400 W. Around Back
P.O. Box 339
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(801) 387-5575
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